50 Ways to Reduce Climate Change: A Different Kind of List



It can be overwhelming to think about the climate crisis. This guide puts together resources from top climate scientists and activists to help you discover effective ways to reduce climate change.

Your voice is one of the most powerful tools to combat the climate crisis. By speaking up, you can raise awareness and motivate others to take action.

None of us can change the situation alone; we need to work together. Because collective action is so essential, we must shift the collective consciousness so that we can move towards more sustainable practices.

The climate lawyer and activist James Gustave Speth has said:

> "I used to think the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation, and we scientists don't know how to do that."

We can all be part of the collective shift and cultural transformation. In order to do that, we need to understand the situation so that we take appropriate action.

I've put together this list to help. The goal is not to do all the things on the list, but to find a few things and to do them and to work together for collective change.

Before we begin, here's a bit of background:

50 Ways to Reduce Climate Change: How this List is Different

Most lists about how to reduce climate change focus on what you can do as an individual to reduce your carbon footprint. But focusing on your individual carbon footprints might be actually counterproductive. It de ects attention from where it really belongs.

Did you know that the term "carbon footprint" was, in fact, invented by the fossil fuel industry?

The fossil fuel industry has been on a decades-long, very deliberate campaign to confuse the situation. Exxon Mobil knew as early as the 1970s about the catastrophic effects of climate change and the role fossil fuels play, but they systematically covered up the information. BP, one of the world's seven largest oil companies, coined the term "carbon footprint" in the early 200s to get the public to focus on their own energy consumption instead of that of large companies and the fossil fuel industry itself. Its goal was to make us all feel complicit and powerless as a result. Fossil fuel companies prefer that we work to change our individual actions instead of the structures themselves.

50 Ways to Reduce Climate Change: The List

I've broken down the 50 ways to reduce climate change into five different categories. As you'll see, these categories are porous, and some of the items could appear in multiple categories, but I hope this helps frame the situation and gives you some ideas about what you can do in your own life to help reduce climate change.

No one can do all of these 50 things. What is important is that we understand how the system works and do SOMETHING. And what is important is that we find ways to be involved that suit our particular interests, passions, and strengths.

You don't need lots of extra time or money to get involved because the most important thing any of us can do is raise awareness, and we can all talk about the climate crisis to the people around us. So do what you can and celebrate that! At the end of the list, I have some more specific pointers on how to use the list.

50 Ways to Reduce Climate Change: 5 Categories

- **Mindset / Communication/ Education**
- **Organize/ Community/ Political Action**
- **Follow the Money**
- **Reduce Carbon Footprint/ Switch More CO2 friendly practices**
- **Support Organizations Doing Good Work**

Mindset / Communication/ Education

Shifting our mindset around climate change is one of the most powerful things we can do. To effectively change any situation, we must understand it. None of us can take on this problem on our own. We must understand that we are all interconnected.

1. Get/ stay involved.

Despair and apathy don't help. Acting with love, connection, compassion, and passion are the best tools to combat the climate crisis (after all the fossil fuel companies would prefer we were apathetic and give up).

2. Pay attention to your feelings.

If you are upset, rather than shut down, grieve. Express what you feel. Anger can be used to fuel action. We can be angry at the system while also being compassionate towards individuals because we're all part of the system. It's not a matter of being pure, but of shifting collectively.

3. **Focus on the ways in which reducing climate change can make all of our lives BETTER.**

Rather than seeing these changes that we need to make as sacrifices, celebrate the changes that need to be made: clean water, clean air, more trees, healthy food, more equity, more agency–all of these things lead to greater health and happiness for everyone!

4. **Educate yourself.**

Rather than being overwhelmed, educate yourself to understand the problem better so that you can be a voice for the most effective change. There are many wonderful books, podcasts, and programs to help us all understand the evolving situation better.

5. **Speak out.

Breaking the silence around climate change is one of the very most important and powerful things we can do. The climate scientist and activist Katherine Hayhoe says it is the most important thing we can do. Watch her Ted Talk.

6. **Talk to your friends and family.**

Talk to your co-workers. Talk to acquaintances that you meet. Your job is not to convince them of the science or to convince them to change their lives. Your job is to talk about your concerns and what you are doing. Share your thoughts and your life. If people don't agree with you, then don't feel that you need to continue the conversation if it's very tense, but find other people to talk to abotu this subject. After all, the vast majority of people believe climate change is a problem and want to do more about it.

7. **Talk about the weather**

–it's changing! Talking about the weather is no longer a simple, mundane topic.

8. **Talk about the books, movies, and podcasts about climate change that you enjoy.**

9. **Talk about what you've been doing to take action to reduce climate change.**

   If you are engaged in local organizations or are taking steps to shift away from fossil fuels, help regenerate the environment, be a voice for climate justice etc in your own life. Talk about the actions you're taking and why. Use the rst person. Tell personal stories.

10. **Bring the topic into your everyday life, make it a part of the work you do.**

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11. **Bring up the climate crisis at the dinner table.**

    If you have children, talk to them about it, educate them, and give them tools to get involved and remain active and hopeful. Talk to friends and family. Make it a regular topic of conversation.

12. **Write letters to your local paper,**

    Write op-ed pieces, share the information that you know.

13. **Support Climate Education at all levels**

    From elementary through high school through the University level and beyond. One great organization is Spring Forward a youth-to-youth climate organization that partners with schools and teachers to bring climate justice education to children. (My daughter is a co-founder!)

14. Share resources

Ideas, and things you've done and are doing to reduce climate change. Share this list 🙂

15. Participate in public actions

And protests that raise awareness; marches, sit-ins, climate strikes all are ways of breaking climate silence and showing the importance of immediate collective action.

16. Shift the mindset from individual to collective action.

For example, instead of only thinking about whether you bike to work, get friends to bike with you, work to improve bike lanes, and work towards a carbon tax.

17. Support the natural world.

Nature is the best technology to keep our earth in balance. So we must focus on conserving and regenerating natural ecosystems. The natural world is amazingly resilient and powerful. After all, there is no life outside of the natural world–it is not separate from us, and we are not separate from it. This impressive new book shows the power of the natural world to reduce the impacts of climate change: Regeneration.

18. Remember, the climate crisis is not only about the natural world but about *people*.

People around the world are experiencing the adverse affects of climate change right now. Climate change doesn't affect all people equally— working to reduce climate change is an act of social justice. But though it doesn't affect everyone equally, it does affect everyone, so even if you don't feel the impacts now, working to reduce climate change protects you in the future and your children and grandchildren.

19. **Put your energy into actions that most interest you and where you can use your strengths and passions.**

    For example, if you love to organize, get involved with a grassroots movement. If you love technology, get involved in clean energy.

20. **Focus not only on environmental wellbeing but also on individual and social wellbeing.**

    They all go together! So many of the ways that we can reduce climate change will lead to prioritizing individuals over big systems, to living in more equitable, humane, happy, healthy ways.

21. **Celebrate the good news.**

    Pay attention to all the small wins, to all the ways people are engaged in this problem and working for positive solutions. Celebrate yourself. Avoid paying too much attention to negative, fear-mongering news sources.

Political Engagement/ Organize/ Community Action

22. **Vote for candidates who are working to reduce climate change and its effects.**

    Government is one of the most essential players in our ability to reduce climate change, and we need to vote for candidates who will take strong action. Pay attention to the government. Educate yourself about the candidates who will do most for the environment and vote in all national, state-wide, and local elections.

23. **Support candidates across the country who are advocates for climate action.**

    Phonebank for them; tell friends who live in their district to vote for them; when possible, donate money to candidates who are fighting for systemic action.

24. **Put pressure on your elected officials to take appropriate action.**

Call them. Write them. Show up at their office. Thank them when they do good work. Be part of groups that also communicate with and put pressure on and work with government officials.

25. **Join climate action groups.**

Groups like 350.org, Extinction Rebellion, Sunrise, Greenpeace, and others are working to create change. Don't just do it on your own. Connect with other people. Or start your own group.

26. **Get involved with local organizations that are working to make your town/ community more climate-friendly.**

This can take many different forms: you can work to restore or protect grasslands or forests in your area. You can work on transportation, city politics, education, communication/ news, zoning. Work on whatever most interests you.

27. **Help make your workplace net zero.**

Talk to and organize other people. You can try to shift how your company banks, the carbon footprint of the office, and the environmental impact of the product (tangible or not) the workplace produces itself.

28. **Get involved with other people at your school/ *alma mater* to make your places of education reduce climate change.**

You could help organize meatless Mondays at the local elementary school or join the divest movement at your university. Work with the communities that you're a part of already.

29. **Work in a profession where you can use your passion for reducing climate change.**

    Make it part of your professional life...you can do this in a wide variety of fields, from politics to education, the arts, industry, journalism, environmental activism, green technology, eco-agriculture, and beyond.

30. **Where possible, shift to an economy where the holding capacity of the planet is taken into consideration, where there are no "waste" products that are simply thrown out, and where things are shared and re-used.**

    Learn more about circular/ donut economies and get involved.

31. **Get involved with efforts to protect the natural world.**

    Deforestation, the destruction of the ocean, destruction of wetlands, and more all lead directly to climate change. Educate yourself and others about this. Support the ecosystem and groups that support the ecosystem.

32. **Get involved with efforts to shift away from destructive agricultural practices and factory farming and to more plant-based diets and changes in farm subsidies.**

    Educate yourself and others about this.

33. **Work to reduce inequality, racism, sexism. Work to prevent war.**

    Work to change our financial system so that individuals, not money interest, have real power. Work to change voting rights and lobbying regulations and the role of money in elections. All of these political changes are inextricably connected to climate change.

34. **Work globally to reduce climate change.**

    Strengthen global groups that help reduce climate change. Support international regulations, communication, and cooperation. Just as no individual can tackle this problem alone, no country can tackle it alone. We need cross-national participation and cooperation. This means working to vest power in the global South and in the far North, those communities most affected by climate change, but that often have the least international power.

Follow the Money/ Pressure Industry

When it comes down to it, industry and large corporations are one of the very largest sectors that are destroying the environment. That means we need to put pressure on them.

35. **Stop buying from the biggest polluters.**

    Educate yourself on who they are (this website is wonderful).

36. **Call or write companies that are big polluters and tell them what you think of their policies and why you will be limiting or stopping your purchases from them.**

37. **Talk to managers at stores you go to and tell them your concerns about their environmental practices.**

38. **Work to limit the influence of big business and big money in politics.**

    Work to reduce lobbying power, for election finance reform, and for voting rights. (see #23).

39. **Change your credit card and bank to banks that are not investing in the fossil fuel industry.**

Big banks are some of the biggest polluters, investing most heavily in the fossil fuel industry and industries that cause deforestation. Take your money out of these banks and write them a letter telling them why. Write negative reviews of the bank. One bank that is committed to greener, and more socially just practices is Amalgamated Bank. It's very easy to switch your credit card. Then each time you make a purchase, 1% of your money is not going to support the dirty bank.

40. **Get involved with Stop the Money Pipeline**

A group working to put pressure on the banking and investing industries. See more

41. **Get involved in local divest movements**

At universities, workplace retirement accounts, towns, and more. Some progress is being made.

42. **If you have investments, switch your investments to green investments.**

Not only is it responsible, but it's often a better investment. Clean energy had bigger financial growth than the fossil fuel industry. And if you end up not earning quite as much money from your investments, rather than earn a lot of money from a dirty stock market and then give some of it away, invest it cleanly to begin with and give less of it away. This is a better way for the system to run.

Your Personal/ Household Carbon Footprint

When you make these changes to your personal carbon footprint, they are bigger than you. Your friends, family, neighbors will see you and your actions will have a ripple effect. Talk about what you're doing, and your individual action then becomes part of the social network and affects collective action.

When you reduce your carbon footprint, you are also, necessarily changing how you spend your money and what companies your support. This is important and powerful. At the same time, because of the system we live in, green products are often more expensive, so we need to change the system and make them universally accessible instead of calculating our personal carbon footprints or blaming others for things that might not be accessible to them.

43. Eat more plant-based foods/ less meat.

The meat industry is one of the biggest Co2 producers and is responsible for massive deforestation. If you do eat meat, try to eat local, sustainable meat when possible. You don't need to go vegan or vegetarian if that doesn't suit you. Just reducing your meat consumption is powerful.

44. Limit airplane travel.

Airplane travel is one of the most carbon-heavy activities individuals engage in. Don't fly if you don't need to.

45. Limit the amount you drive

Bike or use public transportation, if possible, instead. And drive electric or hybrid cars if possible.

46. Shift away from fossil fuels in your home.

If possible, switch to solar energy for your electricity. If possible, consider geothermal or heat pumps as your heating/ cooling source.

47. Get energy-efficient appliances and conduct a home energy audit.

Many towns/ cities help do this so you can see ways to reduce the carbon footprint of your home.

48. Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. Compost.

Reducing what you consume, the size of your house, the new products you buy is always a good idea. Often you will find that you can find happiness in other areas of your life, spending more time doing what you love and being with the people you love instead of buying new things. Whenever possible, buy second-hand. Avoid fast fashion. Be mindful of the long-life cycle of what you buy and use.

49. **Buy locally, buy organic products if possible.**

Support Organizations Doing Good Work

Remember, everyone has to do what is right according to their particular lives. If you don't have the money to buy organic food, please don't feel bad about that. We want to change the system so that the government no longer subsidizes conventional agriculture, and instead supports organic farming. We want to change the system in which some people have access to high quality organic food while others live in food deserts and have no disposable income. We want to change the nancial system so that there isn't such a big gap between the rich and the poor. We want to end racial inequality.

50. **Donate to:**

- Candidates who prioritize reducing climate change.
- Climate activists groups like Greenpeace and Sunrise.
- Groups doing restoration and conservation work.
- Groups working with Indigenous communities.
- Groups that support women and girls. (Educating and empowering women leads to better climate decisions and better health across the board.)

Donate locally and globally. Donate not just your money but also your time, if possible. Get involved. Help out. Join some of these organizations

Some Tips:

Do what you can do and don't do more. Don't get burned out. Be realistic. Make a plan for yourself and stick to it. Celebrate what you do do and don't be guilty about what you don't.

I suggest thinking about what you can realistically do on this list that you aren't already doing? Are there changes that don't take a lot of time but that might have an impact? Changing your bank or credit card is one example. Can you make a commitment to bring up the climate crisis in one conversation a week? Can you commit to calling or writing one politician or company each month?

Do you have 30 minutes a week? If you have more time, can you get involved with an organization and spend an hour a week on it?

I recommend making a plan and sticking to it for two or three months. At the end of that time, then readjust.

Keep going. Keep up hope.

"Hope," the writer Frances Moore Lappe, writes, "is not what we see in evidence, it's what we do in action together."

Thanks for all you're doing. Just reading this post is a sign of your interest and care! Please share this with friends and leave a comment. What are you doing? What do you intend to do? What are you sharing with the people in your life? I love to hear from you!

Listen to or watch my interview with Devi Lockwood, the author of 1001 Voices on Climate Change, her book about listening to ordinary people around the world about the effects of climate change in their communities and in their relationship with water. Get to it here.